

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FRB-03 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SCCT-01 /089 W

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P 222234Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 8019

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CO

SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT LOPEZ DEPARTED AUG 22 FOR A MEETING WITH ECUADORIAN PRESIDENT GENERAL GUILLERMO RODRIQUEZ LARA DURING WHICH THE TWO PRESIDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO SIGN A DECLARATION DELINEATING THEIR MARITIME BOUNDARIES. FONMIN LIEVANO TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT THIS SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED AS A UNILATERAL MOVE BY THE GOC FORMALLY ESTABLISHING A 200 MILE RESOURCE CONSERVATION ZONE (BOGOTA 7950). THE WEEK ALSO SAW THE ARRIVAL OF THE NEW CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO COLOMBIA, AUGUST 15. FIRST NATIONAL CITY BANK'S FUTURE IN COLOMBIA WAS AGAIN A NEWS ITEM. FNCB DENIED PRESS REPORTS THAT IT WOULD REMAIN IN COLOMBIA UNDER THE NEW GOC POLICY OF REQUIRING FOREIGN-OWNED BANKS TO TRANSFORM THEMSELVES INTO NATIONAL ENTITIES WITH MAJORITY COLOMBIAN EQUITY (BOGOTA 7872). ON THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE PRESIDENT LOPEZ APPEARED FINALLY TO HAVE ASSUMED THE ROLE OF LIBERAL PARTY LEADER IN FACT AS WELL AS IN NAME. IN A SHARPLY-WORDED LETTER AUGUST 18 TO CHAMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES PRESIDENT ALBERTO SANTOFIMIO, LOPEZ STATED CLEARLY THAT HE EXPECTED THE CHAMBER TO IMPLEMENT HIS ELECTORAL PLEDGE TO NAME A CONSERVATIVE

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AS THE NEXT COMPTROLLER GENERAL. THE NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY

(ELN) AGAIN SURFACED, WITH A FAMILIAR-TYPE OF RAID ON A SMALL VILLAGE, IN SOUTHERN BOLIVER. END SUMMARY

2. PRESIDENT LOPEZ TO ECUADOR. PRESIDENT LOPEZ DEPARTED AUGUST 22 FOR A TWO-DAY MEETING WITH ECUADORIAN PRESIDENT GENERAL GUILLERMO RODRIGUEZ LARA, THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF WHICH WILL BE THE DELINEATION OF THE BORDER, PARTICULARLY THE COASTAL WATERS, BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. FONMCS LIEVANO ASSURED THE AMBASSADOR THAT ALTHOUGH AN

AGREEMENT WILL BE SIGNED STATING THAT EACH COUNTRY RESERVES TO ITSELF THE RIGHT TO DECIDE WHAT KINDS OF JURISDICTION IT WILL ESTABLISH IN THE SEAS OFF ITS COASTS UP TO A MAXIMUM OF 200 MILES, THIS IN NO WAY REPRESENTS A FORMAL UNILATERAL MOVE BY THE GOC. LIEVANO INDICATED THAT THE GOC IS OPTIMISTIC THAT NEXT YEAR'S LOS CONFERENCE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL IN REACHING MULTI-NATIONAL ACCORD IN SUCH ISSUES.

3. AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES AND PRESIDENTIAL-DESIGNATE (DESIGNADO) JULIO CESAR TURBAY AYALA WAS SWORN IN AS PRESIDENT AUGUST 21 FOR THE PERIOD OF THE ABSENCE OF PRESIDENT LOPEZ. THE CEREMONY WAS MARKED BY SIMPLICITY, IN SHARP CONTRAST TO THE POMP SURROUNDING TURBAY'S PREVIOUS ACCESSION IN MARCH WHEN HE WAS SHARPLY CRITICIZED FOR MAKING SO MUCH OF AN OUTMODED INSTITUTION. CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE IS NOW UNDERWAY ON ALTERNATIVE TO THE DESIGNADO SYSTEM.

4. ARRIVAL OF NEW CUBAN AMBASSADOR. ON AUGUST 15 THE NEW CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO COLOMBIA, 37 YEAR OLD FERNANDO RAVELO RENEDO, ARRIVED IN BOGOTA WITH HIS KEY OFFICERS (BOGOTA 7985). ON AUGUST 20 HE MET FOR AN HOUR WITH FONMIN LIEVANO AND ANNOUNCED TO THE PRESS AFTERWARD THAT COLOMBIA AND CUBA WILL SIGN TRADE AGREEMENTS WITHIN A MONTH. HE ALSO STATED THAT CUBA HAD NO PLANS TO SEEK ADMISSION TO THE OAS "UNTIL PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE". AMBASSADOR RAVELO WILL PRESENT HIS CREDENTIALS TO PRESIDENT LOPEZ SOMETIME NEXT WEEK.

5. GOC POLICY ON FOREIGN BANKS. BOGOTA'S "EL ESPECTADOR" REPORTED AUGUST 19 THAT FIRST NATIONAL CITY BANK HAD DECIDED CONFIDENTIAL

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TO CONTINUE OPERATING IN COLOMBIA AND TO RESPECT THE GOC'S POLICY OF REQUIRING FOREIGN-OWNED BANKS TO TRANSFORM THEMSELVES INTO NATIONAL ENTITIES WITH MAJORITY COLOMBIAN EQUITY. NATIONAL CITY REPRESENTATIVES, HOWEVER, TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT THE REPORT IS ERRONEOUS; THAT THEY ARE CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, INCLUDING PRESIDENT LOPEZ, IN AN EFFORT TO FIND SOME ALTERNATIVE TO A SELL-DOWN (BOGOTA 7872).

6. PRESIDENT LOPEZ ASSERTS PARTY LEADERSHIP IN COMPTROLLER-GENERAL ISSUE. IN HIS MOST "POLITICAL" MOVE SINCE ASSUMING THE PRESIDENCY A YEAR AGO, PRESIDENT LOPEZ ASSERTED HIS AUTHORITY AS THE TITULAR HEAD OF THE LIBERAL PARTY BY URGING THE LIBERAL MAJORITY IN THE CHAMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES TO ELECT A CONSERVATIVE AS THE NEXT COMPTROLLER-GENERAL. IN A SHARPLY-WORDED LETTER TO CHAMBER PRESIDENT ALBERTO SANTOFIMIO AUGUST 18, LOPEZ REMINDED THE LIBERALS THAT THEY PLEDGED TO SUPPORT HIM DURING A NATIONAL CONVENTION HELD JULY 26, 1974, AND THAT THIS INCLUDED HIS CAMPAIGN PLEDGE THAT A CONSERVATIVE WOULD BE NAMED TO THE COMPTROLLER-GENERALSHIP. HE THUS LAID HIS PROMISE, THE COMMITMENT OF THE PARTY, AND THE WORD OF THE GOVERNMENT ON THE LINE. LOPEZ PLACED PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE NECESSITY FOR HIS "TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT" COMING BETWEEN THE NATIONAL FRONT GOVERNMENTS OF THE PREVIOUS 16 YEARS AND THE COMPLETELY FREE ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR 1978) TO COMPLY WITH ITS COMMITMENTS IN ORDER TO AVOID THE KIND OF BREACH BETWEEN THE CONSERVATIVE AND LIBERAL PARTIES WHICH EXISTED BEFORE THE FRONT. THE PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVE RESULTED IN THE CHAMBER POSTPONING DISCUSSION OF THE COMPTROLLER-GENERAL-SHIP ISSUE UNTIL SEPTEMBER 9, DURING WHICH A COMMISSION WILL STUDY THE CONTENT OF THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER AND MAKE A RECOMMENDATION. IT IS PROBABLE THAT THE COMMISSION WILL RECOMMEND AND THAT THE CHAMBER WILL ELECT A CONSERVATIVE TO THE POSITION. MOST IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, IS THE PRESIDENT'S SELF-ASSERTION AS THE LIBERAL PARTY'S LEADER IN FACT AS WELL AS IN NAME. WHETHER THIS ACTION GENERATES OTHER ACTIVITIES TO HEAL THE WOUNDS IN THE LIBERAL PARTY CAUSED BY THE COMPETITION BETWEEN SUPPORTERS OF FORMER PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS RESTREPO AND AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON JULIO CESAR TURBAY AYALA REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

7. RURAL VIOLENCE. RURAL VIOLENCE DREW ATTENTION AGAIN THIS WEEK AS BOTH GUERRILLAS AND THE ARMY INITIATED ACTIONS.  
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ON THE NIGHT OF AUGUST 18, 50 UNIFORMED GUERRILLAS OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY (ELN) HELD A SMALL TOWN IN BOLIVAR DEPARTMENT FOR TWO HOURS. DURING THE OCCUPATION THEY EXECUTED A FARMER ACCUSED OF BEING AN INFORMER, KIDNAPPED A MERCHANT, AND STOLE FOOD AND MEDICINE. THIS WAS THE SECOND LARGE SCALE INVASION OF A RURAL TOWN SINCE APRIL 10, WHEN 200 FARC GUERRILLAS OCCUPIED PUERTO RICO IN CAQUETA. ON THE GOVERNMENT SIDE, THE ARMY CARRIED OUT TWO SUCCESSFUL OPERATIONS. THE FIRST RESULTED IN THE CAPTURE OF FOUR MEMBERS OF THE POPULAR LIBERATION ARMY (EPL) IN ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT. THE EPL WAS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN VIRTUALLY ELIMINATED IN LATE JUNE WITH THE DEATH OF ITS PRINCIPAL LEADER IN CALI AND SUBSEQUENT LARGE SCALE ARRESTS, BUT ELEMENTS OF THE PL STILL OPERATE IN THE RURAL AREAS. THE SECOND ARMY OPERATION LED TO THE CAPTURE OF ONE ELN GUERRILLA

AND A NUMBER OF WEAPONS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SANTANDER.  
DESPITE GOVERNMENT SUCCESSES AGAINST THE GUERRILLAS IN  
RECENT MONTHS, THE FARC, ELN, AND THE EPL STILL APPEAR  
TO STRIKE AT WILL AND THE ELIMINATION OF THESE GROUPS  
REMAINS AN ELUSIVE GOAL.  
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